



Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Johnson, Sen. Slossberg, Rep. Miller, Sen. Welch, Rep. Srinivasan and other distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this testimony to your committee. My name is Gordon Willard, Executive Director at the Connecticut Humane Society. I have been with the Connecticut Humane Society for nearly three years and have headed animal welfare agencies for 30 years. I am here to testify in support of the concept in HB6591.

Previous drafts of this bill contained a penalty provision that would provide a punishment to anyone violating the intent of the bill. The Connecticut Humane Society urges the committee to add a penalty provision to the bill where any person who uses gunshot and causes an animal to suffer is in violation of the bill and would be charged with a felony. Without the penalty provision, this bill would become ineffective, would not clearly instruct law enforcement and our judiciary, and would not reflect Connecticut's wishes to protect animals from pain and suffering.

I am uniquely qualified to speak about this bill because "Buddy" was one of my dogs. Buddy was a German shepherd surrendered by his owner to the Connecticut Humane Society in Westport. Buddy was transferred to Leader of the Pack Rescue in Norwalk, one of our rescue partners, so that a proper home could be found for him. Buddy was placed in a foster home on July 22 by Leader of the Pack Rescue where he was reported to be doing very well. Buddy was subsequently adopted by a couple in Middletown and was reportedly shot by the adopter's boyfriend some 40 hours after his adoption. There was no provocation and in fact, Buddy was confined in a kennel, posing no threat to anyone.

I have learned from conversations with law enforcement who have attempted to prosecute a case against those who have shot their animals, including attempts to prosecute Buddy's death, that prosecution in the past has been short-circuited.

Regarding the language that preserves the Connecticut Humane Society's authority to euthanize animals, I am compelled for the sake of the animals we serve to besiege the committee to maintain that provision. CHS handles over 6,000 animals a year at three

animal care and adoption facilities within the State. We treat thousands more at our low-fee, donor subsidized animal care clinic.

The Newington branch of CHS for the most part has a paid veterinarian and vet tech staff on duty five and a half days a week. The two satellite shelters have a veterinarian on duty once a week and at least one veterinary technician five days a week; however the shelters remain open seven days a week. We are often presented with pets that are in serious medical condition where euthanasia is warranted. Owners have attempted to go to local veterinarians for help or have been unable to secure help because they lack the funds. They come to all of our shelters looking for assistance and often, we provide that last act of humanity regardless of payment. It is performed by trained individuals, often a veterinarian or veterinary technician, using the same practices, drugs, and protocols used by any veterinary hospital. We can provide humane euthanasia for the animal's sake.

I have a long and thorough background in ensuring animal care workers are properly trained to perform euthanasia. I was on the task force in New York State that wrote the regulations and the training program. I provided specialized training to more than 400 animal care workers who became certified euthanasia technicians. I taught, tested and recommended those individuals to the State which certified them, upon my recommendation. New York State and at least 38 other states trust trained individuals.

I also personally held a Federal DEA license and could purchase, dispense and administer controlled substances. I am fully aware of the requirements for purchasing, using and managing controlled substances. I am here to say that qualified euthanasia technicians exist in a majority of the States; they are not veterinarians but they possess the judgment, empathy and compassion of a trained individual.

When an animal is in pain and is suffering, a humane form of euthanasia is required. Gunshot and other forms of killing an animal by untrained individuals can lead to pain and suffering and should not be considered humane euthanasia.

Concepts such as "Buddy's Law" will provide a deterrent to pet owners who callously and negligently shoot their dog or cat instead of contacting their local animal control officer, humane society, veterinarian and other animal rescue organizations. The act of shooting an animal except by those who are trained to do so, leads to pain and suffering and cannot be considered a form of humane euthanasia.

**CHS has identified the "Buddy's Law" initiative as one of its top priorities of 2013 and hopes you will support advocating for the measure to pass this year!**

Thank you for listening to my testimony and for considering favorably approving HB6591 with the added penalty. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding my testimony.